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THE COUNTING-OUT RHYMES OF CHILDREN.

A STUDY IN FOLK-LORE.

CHILDREN playing out-door games, such as "Hide and Seek" and "I Spy," in which one of their number has to take an undesirable part, adopt a method of determining who shall bear the burden, which involves the principle of casting lots, but differs in manner of execution. The process is called in Scotland "chapping out" and "titting out," but in England and America it is commonly known as "counting out." It is usually conducted as follows: a leader, generally self-appointed, having secured the attention of the boys and girls about to join in the proposed game, arranges them in a row or in a circle around him, as fancy may dictate. He then repeats a peculiar doggerel, sometimes with a rapidity which can only be acquired by great familiarity and a dexterous tongue, and pointing with the hand or forefinger to each child in succession, not forgetting himself (or herself), allots to each one word of the mysterious formula:—

One-ery, two-ery, ickery, Ann,
Fillicy, fallacy, Nicholas, John,
Queever, quaver, English, knaver,
Stinckelum, stanckelum, Jericho, buck!

This example contains sixteen words; if there is a greater number of children a longer verse is used, but generally the number of words is greater than the number of children, so that the leader begins the round of the group a second time, and mayhap a third time, giving to each child one word of the doggerel. Having completed the verse or sentence, the child on whom the last word falls is said to be "out," and steps aside. In repeating the above doggerel, the accent falls on the first syllable of each polysyllabic word. A very common ending is:—

One, two, three,
Out goes she (or he)!

and the last word is generally said with great emphasis, or shouted.

After the child thus "counted out" has withdrawn, the leader repeats the same doggerel with the same formalities, and, as before, the boy or girl to whom the last word is allotted is "out," and stands aside. The unmeaning doggerel is repeated again and again to a diminishing number of children, and the process of elimination is continued until only two of them remain. The leader then counts out once more, and the child not set free by the magic word is declared to be "*it*," and must take the objectionable part in the game.

The word "*it*" is always used in this technical sense, denoting the one bearing the disagreeable duty, or perhaps the distinguished part, in the game; no child questions its meaning, nor have we learned of any substitute for this significant monosyllable; it is not safe, however, to assert that there is no equivalent, when we consider the innumerable whims of the army of children. The declaration to a child, "You are *it*!" following the process of counting out, seems to carry with it the force of a military order, and is, in many cases, more promptly obeyed than a parent's command.

Children learn these rhymes by sound alone from their playmates, a few years older; though accuracy is faithfully attempted, changes are introduced from time to time, and in the course of generations the results would scarcely be recognized by the children of an earlier period. The round game of Scandal, which is said to have furnished amusement to English literary celebrities, illustrates the way in which oral communications are distorted. Since counting out is the main object in view, the puerile mind is probably satisfied with retaining the rhythm, the rhyme, the number of words, and the general construction, any or all of these features. So far as counting out is concerned in the simple rhyme, —

One, two, three, four,
Mary at the cottage door,
Five, six, seven, eight,
Eating cherries off a plate,

it makes no difference whether we say Jennie for Mary, kitchen for cottage, apples for cherries, and picking for eating; the general effect is the same.

Of the rhyme beginning: —

One-ery, two-ery, ickery, Ann,

I have collected about thirty variants: as repeated by some, "English knaver" becomes "Irish Mary," or "Virgin Mary;" some insert the word "berry" or the word "John" before "buck" in the last line; "ickery" becomes "hickory;" "stinckelum" becomes "stringelum," etc., etc.

Ana, mana, mona, mike;
Barcelona, bona, strike;
Care, ware, frow, frack;
Hallico, ballico, wee, wo, wack!
(*New York city.*)

This also is subject to countless variations: "barcelona" becomes "tuscalona," tuscaloosa, pesky-larry, etc. One form ends in, —

Huldy, guldy, boo, out goes you.

Ana, mana, dipery Dick,
Delia, dolia, Dominick ;
Hytcha, pytcha, dominytcha,
Hy, pon, tush.

(*Central New York.*)

In some districts, the third line is given as "Houtcha, poutcha, dominoutcha," and in others, "Hotcha, potcha," etc. "Tush" may also become "tus" or "tusk."

Haley, maley, tippety fig,
Tiney, toney, tombo, nig ;
Goat, throat, country note,
Tiney, toney, tiz.

(*Rhode Island.*)

Eatum, peatum, penny, pie,
Babyloni, stickum, stie,
Stand you out thereby.

(*Scotland.*)

The favorite to-day among American children is the highly absurd jingle :—

Ena, mena, mina, mo,
Catch a nigger by the toe,
If he hollers let him go,
Ena, mena, mina, mo.

A very natural corruption is that of "One is all, two is all, six is all, seven," into "One-erzoll, two-erzoll, zickerzoll, zan," but the conversion of "bobtail vinegar" (with which the second line begins) into "Baptist minister" is a surprise. Yet the history of the English language affords continually examples not more eccentric; the names of old taverns in England have undergone curious transformation at the hands, or strictly at the mouths, of the common people. The British tar who finds his sea-home christened "*Bel-lerophon*" is not long in transmuting it into *Billy Ruffian*, a much more comprehensible and satisfactory name to him. "*L'Hirondelle*" became in like manner *Iron Devil*.

The school-boy looks upon these rhymes as merely queer sounds, and has "no compunction in making them queerer; and his genius leads him to tack on other nonsense, provided it rhymes." (Ellis.)

The number of these doggerels in use among children is far greater than commonly supposed. I have collected no less than four hundred and sixty current in England and America.

I have also ascertained that the custom of counting out obtains around the world among civilized and semi-civilized races, and by correspondence and personal inquiry have collected examples in the following languages: Penobscot, Japanese, Hawaii, Marâthî, Romany, Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, Bulgarian, Modern Greek,

Swedish, Portuguese, Spanish, Basque, Italian, French, Dutch, Plattdeutsch, German, and with the English above-named they number nearly nine hundred.

The customs connected with counting out, as reported from all parts of the world, and even the rhymes themselves, have many features which are strikingly similar. Children in all lands use the pebble, as in the English game of "Holders," French "Boule;" sometimes an inverted cap plays a rôle in the process. The doggerels are similar in their rhythm, in the use of numerals, in the admixture of gibberish with words of known meaning, and in the application to the custom of counting out.

Of the doggerels in foreign languages we give a few selected examples:—

MARĀTHI.

Ha hoo, ta too,
Pooska, bramina, padala, stoo.
(*Poona, India.*)

TURKISH AND ARMENIAN.

Allem, Bellem, Chirozi,
Chirmirozi, fotozi,
Fotoz gider magara,
Magarada tilki bash,
Pilki beni korkootdi.
Aallede shooullede Edirne.
Divid bashi
Ben olayan kehada bashi.

Translation.

Allem, Bellem, Chirozi,
Chirmirozi, a ghost.
The ghost goes into a cave,
In the cave a fox's head,
The fox frightened me.
Allede, shooullede at Edirne.
The head of the pen;
Let me be the head of clerks.
(*Constantinople.*)

BULGARIAN.

Ská'tchá zhá'bà,
Ōt plēt' do plēt'
Tá ví'ká, ta klí'ka,
Zbí'raitě syâ, voiní'tze,
Ná tsí'glěvō, pěrtsě,
Tsí'glim, mī'glim,
Byě'lá kost, kóstchī'tsá.

Translation of the first four lines.

A frog is jumping
From fence to fence,
It is calling, it is screaming —
Muster yourselves, soldiers !

The last line is :

White bone — little bone.

BASQUE.

Harla, marla, kin-kuan-kin, portan-zela, portan-min, arrichifialet,
segere, megere, kiru, karum, pec !

SWEDISH.

Åla, dåla ;
Fike, fake ;
Bande, kråke ;
Stina, stana ;
Bus, bas ;
Knis, knas ;
Knagen.

FRENCH.

Un, deux, trois,
Tu ne l'es pas.
Quatre, cinq, six,
Va t'en d'ici.

DUTCH.

Een, twee, een kopje thee ;
Een klontje er bij,
Af ben jij.

GERMAN.

1, 2, Polizei,
3, 4, Officier,
5, 6, alte Hex,
7, 8, gute Nacht,
9, 10, auf Wiedersehen,
11, 12, junge Wölf,
13, 14, blaue Schürzen,
15, 16, alte Hexen,
17, 18, Mädle wachsen,
19, 20, Gott verdanzig.

Ene, bene, dunke, funke,
Rabe, schnabe, dippe, dappe,
Käse, knappe,
Ulle bulle ros.
Ib ab aus,
Du liegst draus.

Une, dune, quinde, quande,
 Fahr mit mir nach Engellande,
 Engelland ist zugeschlossen,
 Ist der Schlüssel abgebrochen,
 Vier Pferde an dem Wagen,
 Mit der Peitsche muss man schlagen,
 Kutscher, Speck, Dreck,
 Ich oder Du must weg.

We believe that the custom of counting out is one of much antiquity, and that it is a survival of sortilege or divination by lot. Sortilege was practised among the ancient heathen nations as well as by the Israelites, and many illustrations of this will occur to our readers.

The use of the lot at first received divine sanction, as in the story of Achan related by Joshua, but after this was withheld the practice fell into the hands of sorcerers, which very name signifies lot-taker. The doggerels themselves I regard as a survival of the spoken charms used by sorcerers in ancient times in conjunction with their mystic incantations. There are numerous examples of these charms, such as:—

Huat hanat ista pista sista domiabo damnaustra. (Cato, 235 B. C.)

and: Irririori, ririori essere, rhuder fere.

and: Meu, treu, mor, phor,
 Teux, za, zor,
 Phe, lou, chri,
 Ge, ze, on. (Alexander of Tralles.)

In only one instance have I been able to directly connect a child's counting-out rhyme with a magic spell: according to Leland, the rhyme beginning, —

One-ery, two-ery, ickery, Ann,

above given, is a gypsy magic spell in the Romany language.

Tylor, in his "Primitive Culture," holds that things which occupy an important place in the life-history of grown men in a savage state become the playthings of children in a period of civilization; thus the sling and the bow and arrow, which formed the weapons of mankind in an early stage of its existence, and are still the reliance of savage tribes, have become toys in the hands of all civilized children at the present day. Many games current in Europe and America are known to be sportive imitations of customs which formerly had a significant and serious aspect.

Adopting this theory, I hold that "counting out" is a survival of the practice of the sorcerer, using this word in its restricted and etymological meaning; and that the spoken and written charms originally used to enforce priestly power have become adjuncts to these

puerile games, and the basis of the counting-out doggerels under consideration.

The idea that European and American children engaged in "counting out" for games are repeating in innocent ignorance the practices and language of a sorcerer of a dark age is perhaps startling, but can be shown to have a high degree of probability. The leader in counting out performs an incantation, but the children grouped around him are free from that awe and superstitious reverence which characterized the procedure in its earlier state. Many circumstances make this view plausible, and clothe the doggerels with a new and fascinating interest.

H. Carrington Bolton.

LENÂPÉ CONVERSATIONS.

IN August, 1886, and September, 1887, I had many conversations with the Rev. Albert Seqaqnind Anthony, a highly educated Delaware Indian, then assistant missionary to the Six Nations, in Ontario, Canada. Our immediate business was the revision of the "Lenâpé-English Dictionary," which has since been published by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania; but in the intervals of that rather arduous and dry labor, we sought recreation in broader subjects of thought, and our discourse often fell on the ancient traditions, folk-lore, and customs of the Lenâpé, now fast disappearing, and on questions concerning their history. Of many of these I made notes at the time, and some of them seem so well worth preserving that I have concluded to throw them together into a short paper.

My informant, Mr. Anthony, was on his father's side a Delaware, or Lenâpé, of the Minsi tribe, while his grandmother was a Shawnee. He himself was born on the Ontario Reservation, and up to his thirteenth year spoke nothing but pure Lenâpé. His present age is about fifty years, so that his memory carries him back to the fourth decade of this century.

One of his earliest reminiscences was of the last surviving emigrant from the native home of his ancestors in Eastern Pennsylvania, — a venerable squaw (*ochquèu*, woman, hen), supposed to be a hundred years old. At the time her parents left the mountains between the Lehigh and Susquehanna rivers, she was "old enough to carry a pack," — twelve years, probably. This must have been about 1760, as after the French War (1755) the natives rapidly deserted that region.